

Post

Environmental injustice is a web made up of misleading companies that take advantage of cheap land where impoverished populations live due to the lower costs of living. This can be examined case by case to identify a different variety of problems such as economic, legal, and technological problems. Overarching is the problem of cultural and educational issues in that areas with lower class citizens take the brunt of these implementations of questionable job cuts, dump sites, mining locations, and so forth.

The main trend in environmental injustice ties in extremely closely with social injustice. Social injustice is the placement of impoverished populations in lesser quality areas and not having the funds to clean up these places, making the process cyclical. Furthermore, companies and corporations look into the same or nearby cheap land to either build or mine from. This leads to the problem of environmental injustice, or the trend of displacement with cheap and industrialized land.

The first lens that environmental injustice can be looked at is economic. Take for instance, the boom of the hog farming industry in North Carolina. The hog population in North Carolina has grown from 2 million in 1992 to 10 million (Duke University) according to recent records. In response to this, the meat hog farms and meat processing factories in North Carolina have laid off workers and condensed down to larger and more densely hog-populated farms. Furthermore, the waste generated by these farms, despite being a regulated distance away, is being dumped in or near waterways, resulting in contaminated drinking water and numerous livestock deaths. (Duke University)

Secondly, the problem of environmental injustice could be scrutinized legally. In this example, the infamous case of Love Canal, New York can be considered. In 1941, Hooker Chemical used a former dream of a canal to dump chemical and industrial waste into and then cover the barrels with what was thought to be acceptable clay. At the time, dumping into landfills was legal so long as the company owned the land in which it dumped. However, rather than have the several feet of clay Hooker claimed to have over the barrels were really just a couple of inches. Furthermore, without testing the clay or the basements of the nearby homes, Hooker just warned the town not to dig where the barrels were located and then sold the canal to the Niagara Falls School Board, which then preceded to build a school and playground on top of the burial site. In 1978, articles about the chemicals buried in Love Canal sparked interest among the populace that was living around the cheap land and parents began questioning nervous system diseases and problems, such as epilepsy, with the chemicals seeping into the underground system. Slowly, the town was evacuated with the first two "rings" of town located closest to the canal, but people who were considered too far from the chemicals were not evacuated and nor could they afford to leave. Two years later, in 1980 the remaining of the homes and population were evacuated and bulldozed in 1982. The land north of the dumpsite was deemed habitable in 1988

and were sold for twenty percent lower than market value due to liability of contamination, while the rest of the areas were declared uninhabitable. (Engelhaupt, Erika) To this day there are still tens of thousands of tons of chemical and industrial waste that was deemed too dangerous to remove by the EPA despite an ongoing cleaning effort. The most concerning part of this case in the light of environmental injustice besides the refusal to evacuate all of the contaminated houses, is the refurbishing of land just outside of the considered uninhabitable and contaminated area and then selling potentially contaminated houses for the lower cost. This is extremely questionable on the part of the legal system.

Finally, the technological advancements made in mining can be analyzed. The use of mountaintop removal has displaced countless towns and houses in West Virginia that cannot afford to find new homes. Furthermore, when the companies that conduct the mountaintop mining replace the communities they disrupt, they move them below the mining facilities, not only destroying the land the community once lived on but also creating a dangerous environment for the inhabitants below harmful coal sludge reserves. The most disturbing of these cases was the mountaintop removal of Sundial, West Virginia, in which Marsh Fork Elementary was barricaded by a clay levee for the coal sludge being produced by surface mining. According to sources, if the levee were to break, there would be three minutes to evacuate the school before the depth reached six feet. The abuse of technological advancements here to haphazardly protect the lower class and less fortunate population here is sickening and needs to be taken more seriously. (Jarrell, Debbie and multiple articles)

With each case like these that arises, while there are obvious problems that come up with their surfacing, populations become more active and aware of their rights that may have not been made aware to them in the first place. The Natural Resources Defense Council deals with environmental problems like these and has passed acts such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to the EPA laws to protect human health and the ban of pesticide DDT. (Miller, Vernice and Renee Skelton) With ever-arising problems comes the surface of new problems, which may never cease, but will hopefully allow more populations to see their rights.

Bibliography

- 1) Engelhaupt, Erika. "Happy Birthday, Love Canal." *Chemical & Engineering News*. 17 November 2008. Web. 05 November 2012. <<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/government/86/8646gov2.html>>
- 2) Jarrell, Debbie and multiple articles. "Marsh Fork Elementary School: Sundial, WV." [iLoveMountains.org](http://ilovemountains.org). Web. 05 November 2012. <<http://ilovemountains.org/memorial/c301>>
- 3) "Key Industries: Hog Farming." Adaptation, "North Carolina in the Global Economy," [Duke University](http://www.learnnc.org), Department of Sociology. Web. 05 November 2012. <<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-recent/6257>>
- 4) Miller, Vernice and Renee Skelton. "the Environmental Justice Movement." [Natural Resources Defense Council](http://www.nrdc.org). 12 October 2006. Web. 05 November 2012. <<http://www.nrdc.org/ej/history/hej.asp>>

Annotations

- 1) **i) Full citation.** Engelhaupt, Erika. "Happy Birthday, Love Canal." *Chemical & Engineering News*. 17 November 2008. Web. 05 November 2012.
<<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/government/86/8646gov2.html>>
- ii) Where does the author work, what else has s/he written about, and what are her/his credentials?** Erika Engelhaupt is a Department Editor at Science News and oversees the editing of articles for all forms of Science News magazine. At the time of this article, she was a writer and editor for the news section of the magazine, focused on environmental contaminants and policy issues.
- iii) What is the main topic or argument of the text?** The main topic of this article is a review of the events that led up to the Love Canal disaster and how the problem is ongoing thirty years later.
- iv) Describe at least three ways that the main topic or argument is fleshed out.** The main topic is fleshed out by providing a historical background, focusing on the legal implications, and then highlighting the current problems of Love Canal after its refurbishing.
- v) What three quotes capture the critical import of the text?** At the time dioxin was buried at Love Canal, it was not thought to cause disease, but it is now known as one of the most carcinogenic chemicals in the world. In those days, Hooker's landfill methods were legal and quite common; companies were allowed to dump waste in almost any manner, as long as they owned the land on which they dumped." "In 1953, the canal was covered with soil and sold to the local school board, and an elementary school and playground were built on the site. A working-class neighborhood sprang up around them." "The abandoned homes in the inner rings were bulldozed in 1982, and in 1988 the New York state health commissioner, David Axelrod, declared the area north of the canal to be safe for habitation based on an interagency review overseen by EPA. The Love Canal Area Revitalization Agency refurbished the empty homes north of the canal in the 1990s and sold them for 20% below market value, with waivers of liability for contamination."
- vi) Explain how the argument and evidence in the text supports your research focus.** This article supports the write-up in that it clearly highlights the main point of the abuse of the legal system without having a giant sticker labeling it as environmental injustice.
- vii) List at least two details or references from the text that you have used in your presentation and wiki post.** The two main details taken away from this text were the specific history of the dumping site, including the effects of the chemicals on the families around the canal, and the refurbishing and reselling of possibly contaminated homes.
- 2) **i) Full citation.** Jarrell, Debbie and multiple articles. "Marsh Fork Elementary School: Sundial, WV." [iloveMountains.org](http://ilovemountains.org). Web. 05 November 2012. <<http://ilovemountains.org/memorial/c301>>
- ii) Where does the author work, what else has s/he written about, and what are her/his credentials?** This website contains multiple articles from sources such as Debbie Jarrell, who is the administrative assistant for the Commercial Plastics Recycling in West Virginia, articles from the "Appalachian Voices" website and several comments and posts by the local and concerned public.
- iii) What is the main topic or argument of the text?** The main topic of the website is the public

outcry against the surface mining in Sundial, West Virginia, specifically concerning Marsh Fork Elementary.

iv) Describe at least three ways that the main topic or argument is fleshed out. There are multiple instances for the way this source attacks the problem; through photos, community posts and comments, videos, and articles from several sources.

v) What three quotes capture the critical import of the text? “The Marsh Fork Elementary School in Sundial, West Virginia is located 400 yards downslope from a mountaintop removal mine. Sundial is a community in the coal river valley about 10 miles south of Whitesville. The mining site above the school, operated by Massey Energy, houses the Shumate sludge impoundment. With 2.8 billion gallons of coal sludge held back by a 385-foot-high earthen dam, it is one of West Virginia’s largest impoundments.” “Should the earthen dam of the Shumate impoundment ever be breached, there would be less than three minutes to evacuate the Marsh Fork Elementary School before the water reached 6 feet. The maps below show the evacuation area below the impoundment and the approximate depth the to which the floodwaters would rise – 15 feet at the school.” [Poem/letter to the editor written by Debbie Jarrell]: “I have sat quiet as the hoses have been laid over the edge of the slurry pond under the guise of darkness, pumping out filthy black slurry hurriedly before inspectors came.”

vi) Explain how the argument and evidence in the text supports your research focus. The argument presented on this website correlates with the public uproar of the effects of surface mining on their community of Sundial, West Virginia.

vii) List at least two details or references from the text that you have used in your presentation and wiki post. The main details used from this website were those of the sludge being contained by the levee, and the overall public outcry against the surface mining taking place just outside of the local elementary school.

- 3) i) Full citation.** “Key Industries: Hog Farming.” Adaptation, “North Carolina in the Global Economy,” Duke University, Department of Sociology. Web. 05 November 2012.
<<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-recent/6257>>

ii) Where does the author work, what else has s/he written about, and what are her/his credentials? This article was originally released by Duke University and was adapted by North Carolina University.

iii) What is the main topic or argument of the text? The main topic of the article is the timeline of hog farming and the complications that come with hog farming from the past thirty years in North Carolina.

iv) Describe at least three ways that the main topic or argument is fleshed out. The main topic is fleshed out through the use of a graphical picture, a timeline tying in both the hog population boom as well as the environmental issues that came along with the farming boom, and lastly through basic definition and North Carolina’s essential onslaught of competition.

v) What three quotes capture the critical import of the text? “1995: North Carolina Senate passes Bill 1080, the Swine Farm Siting Act, requiring new swine houses or lagoons to be located at least 1,500 feet from an occupied residence, at least 2,500 feet from any school, hospital, or church and at least 100 feet from any property boundary.” “1998: North Carolina’s hog population rises to 10 million from 2 million in 1992.” “1999: Hurricane Floyd hits North Carolina, flooding hog waste lagoons and contaminating the water supply.”

vi) Explain how the argument and evidence in the text supports your research focus.

vii) List at least two details or references from the text that you have used in your presentation and wiki post.

- 4) **i) Full citation.** Miller, Vernice and Renee Skelton. "the Environmental Justice Movement." Natural Resources Defense Council. 12 October 2006. Web. 05 November 2012.

<<http://www.nrdc.org/ej/history/hej.asp>>

ii) Where does the author work, what else has s/he written about, and what are her/his credentials? This article is written by Renee Skelton and Vernice Miller, both are activists in the world of environmental awareness; Vernice Miller is the Vice Chair of the Maryland State Commission on Environmental Justice, for instance. This article was sponsored by the National Resources Defense Council, in light of environmental justice.

iii) What is the main topic or argument of the text? The main topic of this article is the movement among communities as problems arise and the multiple acts that the NRDC supported and passed since the 1960's.

iv) Describe at least three ways that the main topic or argument is fleshed out. The main three ways in which the topic is fleshed out consists of a timeline of the main environmental acts passed by the NRDC, a supporting story among cultural and environmental injustice and lastly specific cases of environmental injustice and racism.

v) What three quotes capture the critical import of the text? "1964 - Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed. The law's "Title VI" -- prohibiting use of federal funds to discriminate based on race, color and national origin -- will become an important tool in environmental justice litigation." "1970 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established to enforce laws that protect human health and safeguard the natural environment." "1972 - The United States bans the use of the toxic pesticide DDT."

vi) Explain how the argument and evidence in the text supports your research focus. The main topic of this article highlights the importance of the NRDC in the rights of all races and cultures as well as the major acts passed to protect people of lesser privileges and their well-being.

vii) List at least two details or references from the text that you have used in your presentation and wiki post. The two major details used from this resource were the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the 1970 EPA establishment of laws enforcing human health and safety regarding the environment and the septicity of what further acts were carried out by the NRDC and EPA.